

D.A.D.D. Doctor Assisted Death with Dignity

Norman Goldstein MD

The December 1996 Special Issue on Death and Dying (aka Death with Dignity) has already created a great deal of interest, as we expected. I sent a copy of this issue to each Executive Director or President of the 50 State Medical Societies, as well as Guam and the Virgin Islands, and other associations around the world.

Next month, we will reprint the speech presented to the National Press Club of Australia by the Honorable Marshall Perron, former Chief Minister of the Australian Parliament, on this important subject. Look for the special issue on Death and Dying-Part II in March.

Facts

1. In the 1996 Gallup poll, 75% of Americans surveyed said they would like to see a law permitting Physician Aid-in-Suffering for those rational terminally ill patients who request it.
2. In 1995 and 1996 surveys, more than 50% of physicians in Washington, Colorado, Oregon and Michigan believe it should be legal for physicians to help rational, suffering, terminally ill patients die who request it to die with dignity.
3. A majority of the more than 5 million voters in Oregon, California and Michigan passed a law permitting Physician Aid-in-Dying, which in actuality is a law protecting physicians who choose to aid the suffering, terminally ill, rational patient.

Despite the fact that the American Medical Association has officially taken an opposing position to Physician Aid-in-Suffering of the terminally ill patient, many rank-and-file physicians in Hawaii and across the country are in favor of assisting their patients to die, and have done so and will do so—though unfortunately they will not and cannot declare their position for legal reasons—at this time.

Hemlock Hawaii has a one-hour video tape of Geoffrey Fieger, Esp., attorney for Dr Jack Kevorkian, speaking at the Hemlock Conference in Denver, November 1996. It is a powerful tape, humorous, poignant and compassionate, showing that this is a patient's choice—yours and mine, and should not be governed by law. Every physician and attorney, medical and law school should have a copy of this tape; it is available by sending \$15.00 to Hemlock Hawaii, P.O. Box 1423, Kailua, HI 96734.

Mahalo to the Hawaii Medical Library and Drs Ann Catts and Drake Will

As regular readers of the Journal know, the December issue contains a very extensive index for the year. The Editorial Board and staff really appreciate the efforts of the reference librarians at the HML for an excellent index—by subject and author.

Thanks also to the Library staff for the many

computer searches conducted for the edition and our authors. The Library also sponsors programs to educate physicians and health providers on the World Wide Web/cyberspace.

Mahalo to Dr Ann Catts and the Library for the exhibit on Death with Dignity, pro and con. It was certainly very well done.

Many thanks to Dr Ann Catts and Dr Drake Will for helping to edit the Journal. Pathologists never truly retire—we keep them too busy to retire. Mahalo Ann and Drake!

The Hawaii Coalition for Health

Did you miss the commentary in last month's Journal by Arlene Meyers MD (aka Arlene Jouxson) entitled "The Words of Hippocrates!"? Arlene, now a second-year law student at the University of Hawaii School of Law, started this Coalition last month.

The highest priority for 1997 will be "the standard medical practice"/"medical necessity" to serve as a resource for the public to substantiate information about their health plan, and to seek assistance in cases where payment for care has been wrongfully refused.

You can join the Coalition. Call Arlene at (808) 622-2655 or fax her at (808) 622-5599.

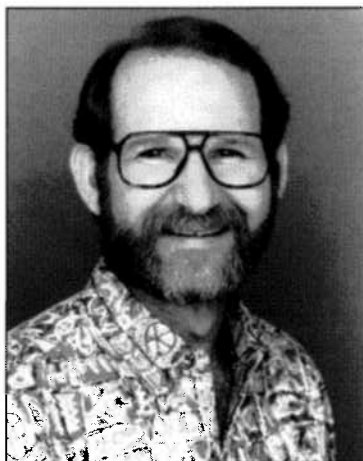
Letter to the Editor

Chicken Skin Time

**Eleanor "Andi" van der Voort RN
President of Hemlock Hawaii**

Bundled in a lined London Fog Coat, woolen underwear and mittens, I arrive in Denver for the Ninth National Conference of the Hemlock Society featuring the topic "Death is Not the Enemy, Suffering Is." Not only the 70 degree temperature, but the people taking part in this educational and positive conference melted my heart. We worked our way through the many Anti-choice protester poster holders outside the hotel and even accepted them within the lecture rooms with their lap top computers. We were offered from morning to eve, dedicated, tireless workers testifying as to their progress in most of the 50 states represented, as far away as Alaska and Hawaii. Several legislators, many physicians and attorneys as well as the person on the street, from all walks of life, race, sex, age

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